

MULTICHANNEL VIDEO COMPETITION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT OF 1998

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM BLILEY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 7, 1998

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2921. I would like to begin by commending both Mr. TAUZIN, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Telecommunications, and Mr. COBLE, the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Courts and Intellectual Property. They have both worked hard to bring this legislation to the floor today, and I thank them for their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation represents a crucial first step in Congress' efforts to reform the laws governing the provision of direct-to-home satellite television and will bring immediate relief to millions of satellite consumers.

More specifically, this legislation addresses the level of copyright royalty fees paid by consumers of satellite services. Aside from the staggering size of these fee increases, the rate levels do not compare favorably to what the cable industry currently pays for identical signals.

At a time when we are counting on the competition that satellite services can bring to consumers, it seems senseless to create additional differences in the costs of programming between these two industries.

The rates that satellite subscribers pay for certain popular programming will certainly rise unless Congress takes action on this legislation. Although the royalty fee increase is already in effect, many satellite carriers have not passed on the full amount of the increases to consumers in anticipation of congressional intervention.

Further, if this situation is not addressed soon, superstations, which remain popular with many consumers, could well be dropped from satellite-delivered programming packages.

Swift action on H.R. 2921 is particularly necessary for the millions of satellite subscribers who, because they reside in rural areas and can receive the affected programming from no other source, will be captive to the rate hikes resulting from higher royalty fees.

This legislation also clarifies the satellite broadcasters' legal standing to sue those who pirate satellite broadcast signals. Signal theft—be it cable or satellite signals—is a serious problem. This provision will help promote the long-term viability of satellite television service.

Mr. Speaker, the Commerce and Judiciary Committees recently joined our counterparts in the Senate in one last effort to gain adoption of a set of more comprehensive changes in the underlying satellite laws this year. I regret to say that this effort failed for both lack of time remaining in this Congress and lack of consensus among the industry players.

But this exercise did create a large degree of agreement on many significant points on which I believe we can build next year. I just would like to state for the record, my firm commitment to revisiting and resolving these issues in a comprehensive manner early next year with the assistance and participation of my good friends and colleagues on the Judiciary

Committee, Mr. TAUZIN and Mr. COBLE in particular.

I have confidence that the two committees can and will work together to enact these important reforms. I can only urge the affected industries to work diligently in the months before the beginning of the next Congress to bury their differences and to lend their cooperation to us.

Mr. Speaker, the reforms contained in H.R. 2921 are a downpayment on the more comprehensive package of changes we hope to bring to the full House early next year. It is a worthy beginning.

I urge the adoption of the bill.

IN SUPPORT OF H. CON. RES. 302, NATIONAL KIDSDAY AND NATIONAL FAMILY MONTH

HON. TIM ROEMER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 8, 1998

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 302, recognizing the importance of children and families in the United States and expressing support for the goals of National KidsDay and National Family Month. I want to thank Representatives PAUL MCHALE, FRANK WOLF, HAROLD FORD, NANCY JOHNSON, and DEBORAH PRYCE, who joined me in introducing this resolution last July, as well as Representative WALTER JONES and the many other Members who helped bring it to the floor today.

We live in an increasingly stressful society these days. Perhaps no one feels this stress more acutely than our Nation's children. The pressures of crime, drugs, violence and broken homes are robbing many children of the joys of childhood. There is a growing concern that too many kids are in crisis, and that no one is speaking out for them or trying to help.

That is what this resolution is all about. It is a simple, straightforward, bipartisan appeal on behalf of the children in our Nation to pay more attention to their needs, to provide them with a healthy and safe environment, and to give them hope for a secure and prosperous future. The resolution also expresses support for two particular initiatives which are being undertaken on behalf of kids: National KidsDay and National Family Month. Both of these initiatives have been created by KidsPeace, our Nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit organization dedicated solely to serving the needs of kids in crisis.

National KidsDay, observed on the third Saturday in September, encourages parents, grandparents and caregivers to spend a day with their children just having fun, and giving them a break from the strains of everyday life. National Family Month is celebrated during the five-week period between Mother's Day and Father's Day. Each week focuses on a specific value that families should provide to their children, including: a safe and secure home; people they can trust; love and value; the power and freedom to grow; and hope for the future.

Mr. Speaker, children are our most precious gift. We cannot afford to let even one child slip through the cracks. KidsPeace and other organizations are doing a wonderful job of reaching out to those children who are most at risk

in society, and helping them develop the courage and skills necessary to overcome crisis. But no matter how hard they try, these organizations cannot take the place of loving parents, stable homes, and a healthy environment in which kids can feel safe, loved and positive about their lives and their futures.

This resolution is small in scope but it is large in symbolism. It sends a message to children that we care about them, we understand their problems, we share their dreams, and we want them to enjoy life to the fullest. As Robert Kennedy said: "When one of us prospers, all of us prosper. When one of us fails, so do we all." I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and give all our children a chance to prosper.

TRIBUTE TO OOIDA

HON. ROY BLUNT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 8, 1998

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, the Owner-Operator Independent Driver Association represents over 40,000 small business professional truckers across America. On October 9, OOIDA will celebrate 25 years of service at the grand opening of their new headquarters in Grain Valley, Missouri.

I had planned on being present at these very special ceremonies, but unfortunately the schedule of the House will prevent my participation.

The Association provides many services to its members including access to affordable health and truck insurance, training, updates on regulatory changes, and support for resources for operating a successful small business. OOIDA is also an effective advocate on its members behalf before state and federal regulatory and legislative bodies.

We need to work closely with OOIDA and their members, small business operators, to seek passage of legislation that achieves a reduction in the number of toll roads, that enhances the deductibility of meals, travel and health insurance expenses, and legislation that reduces the tax burden on all small entrepreneurs. We must stand with OOIDA to eliminate onerous regulations and as partners to rebuild our transportation infrastructure.

On this day, we offer our appreciation for the outstanding achievements of Jim Johnston, President of OOIDA, OOIDA's board of directors and the independent truck drivers who deliver every day for us all.

HAPPY 11TH ANNIVERSARY TO THE COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 8, 1998

Mr. BURTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to observe and pay tribute on the occasion of the eleventh anniversary of the Council of Khalistan. Wednesday, October 7th, marked eleven years since the Sikh people of Punjab declared their independence from India, naming their new country Khalistan. Immediately after this declaration, they appointed the